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On the Gulch

A Newsletter For and About City of Helena Employees

Are you really listening?

To listen (verb):

: to pay attention to someone or something in order to hear what is being said, sung, played, etc.

: to hear what someone has said and understand that it is serious, important, or true

Too often we hear people but we don't really listen to them.

Too often we respond to an email or text message before reading the message all the way through.

Do you start thinking about the story you want to share with your friend or colleague before he or she finishes telling her story? Are you constantly trying to find a way to interject your thoughts and turn the conversation around to something you feel confident talking about?

Here's a challenge for you:

Try listening to your friend or colleague as she speaks. Really listen, and demonstrate that you are listening by repeating back a major point of her story. Ask a relevant question and listen to the answer. That's called responsive listening. It indicates to the speaker that you are not only listening to her, but that you are comprehending her message.

Next, when you read an email message, read all the way through to the end before responding. You may need to read the message more than once to get the details of the message. When you write an email message, keep it short. If you have an action item, put it in bold or use a bullet list.

How can listening - and reading - change things in your life and work?

When you truly listen, the messages between the sender and receiver are clear; there is less room for miscommunication. Doing this right the first time saves time, energy, and frustration.

The act of listening can be powerful in building relationships.

When you are at home, take time to listen to this great piece on NPR:

<http://www.npr.org/programs/ted-radio-hour/411697251/the-act-of-listening?showDate=2015-06-05>.

Here's an article about effective communication: <http://www.helpguide.org/articles/relationships/effective-communication.htm>

Here's another great article on listening, with clear definitions of the different ways we listen - or don't listen!

<https://www.linkedin.com/pulse/most-important-leadership-skill-develop-larry-boyer?trk=prof-post>



FY16 Budget - and Why It Matters to You

Employee News

Congratulations to Pat Marron on his promotion to Parks Maintenance Supervisor!

Welcome to Hugh Pratt, our new Parking Control Officer.

At the regular commission meeting on July 13, following a great (brief, thank you, Bob!) presentation by Bob Ricker and a brief public hearing (not a single public comment), the city commission unanimously passed a nearly \$64M budget without much fanfare.

The budget includes some important funding for necessary infrastructure projects, including funds for improving and maintaining our water & wastewater treatment facilities.

The reality is that our budget, particularly the parts of our city relying on the general fund, begins behind the ball. By State law, cities & counties may only increase the property tax revenues by half the percent of inflation plus an increase for health insurance rates.

So when materials costs go up, gas prices go up, equipment costs increase and health insurance rates go up, our budget immediately gets squeezed.

What does this mean to you? Three things:

1. When making purchases on behalf of your department, use the same thought process you would use if the money was coming out of your personal budget. Do we really need it? Is it a good price? Have I shopped around appropriately? What are the terms? Is it a responsible purchase in terms of quality?
2. You are ambassadors for our city. Take every opportunity to educate your friends and the people with whom you have contact about our city budget process. Share where they can find information, and how the commission makes decisions. Without public input, the commissioners must make the best decisions they can, based on their own perspectives and the very limited public comment they receive.
3. This is your city, too! If you have suggestions about money saving ideas, efficiency ideas, share those with your supervisor. Be prepared to hear constructive feedback on your ideas, and be prepared to present your ideas clearly.

Thank you for representing our city well by being kind, efficient, and for working hard!

Last Chance Splash & Waterslide Earns the Gold!

Lewis and Clark Public Health will present "Silver Buoy" pool awards on Thursday July 23. The award recognizes pool facility operators who invest time, attention and training to meet the many challenges that make pool operation difficult.

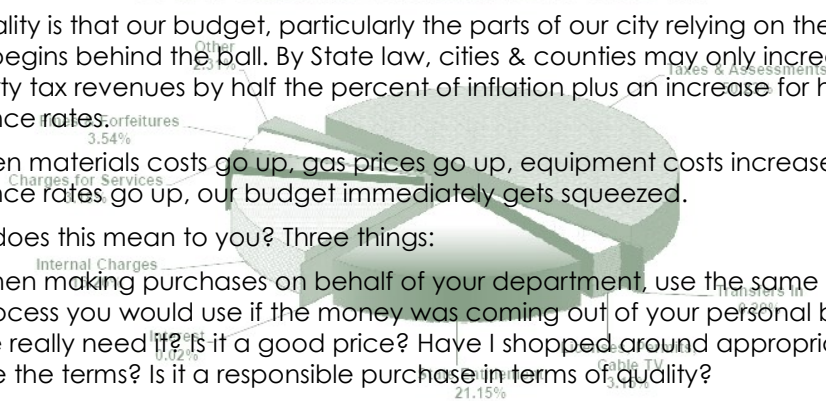
The pool awards were developed by the licensed establishment team to honor those operators of swimming pools that are available to the public who consistently maintain water chemistry and pool safety.

To qualify for an award, the following are required:

- * Water chemistry that is comfortable and safe for the swimmer
- * Good water clarity
- * Pool safety includes water temperature, rescue equipment, life-guards if needed, CPR certification
- * Equipment operating as needed
- * Monitoring/record keeping maintained that tracks water chemistry and actions taken to maintain the pool. This could include closure by the operator until the pool is in a condition safe for swimmers.
- * Trained staff
- * Adequate indoor air quality

Congratulations to Liz Jones and the staff at our City pool!

FY 2016 GENERAL FUND REVENUES BY CATEGORY



Voluntary Sidewalk Program

Do you live in an area in need of sidewalks? Do you have trip hazards on the sidewalk adjacent to your home? Have you considered investing in sidewalk installation but it was just too expensive?

Have a neighborhood meeting and invite our transportation engineer, David Knoepke, to come speak about the city's voluntary sidewalk program.

More feet of sidewalk = lower price per foot!

If you live on a corner, the city will pay half the cost to install the corner ADA ramp.

Call David today! 447-8099